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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05 CIAE-00
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P R 211610Z MAR 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 838
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 8232

LIMDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR FR IS XF
SUBJECT: FRANCO-ISRAELI RELATIONS

SUMMARY: ISRAELI AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED GRATIFICATION AT IMPROVEMENT OVER LAST NINE MONTHS IN FRANCO-ISRAELI RELATIONS, NOTWITHSTANDING ABOU DAOUD STORM. HE ATTRIBUTED MAJOR SHARE OF THE CREDIT TO HIS OWN HARDBOILED AND OUTSPOKEN EFFORTS. END SUMMARY

1. DURING LUNCHEON MEETING WITH CHARGE, ISRAELI AMBASSADOR GAZIT WXPOUNDED AT SOME LENGTH ON THE PRESENT IMPROVED STATE OF FRANCO-ISRAELI RELATIONS. HE DESCRIBED THEM AS IMPROVED OVER THE LAST NINE MONTHS AND ADDUCED CERTAIN SPECIFIC MEASUREMENTS TO DOCUMENT HIS CLAIM. HE INDICATED THERE ARE FOUR PRINCIPAL AREAS OF FRANCO-ISRAELI RELATIONS WHICH HIS GOVERNMENT
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WATCHES CAREFULLY -- BILATERAL RELATIONS, GOF ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT, EXCHANGES OF VISITS, AND OTHER ACTIONS BY FRANCE ON THE INTERNATIONAL FRONT EFFECTING ISRAEL.

2. GAZIT DESCRIBED BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP LARGELY IN TERMS OF CULTURAL AND COMMERCIAL RELATIONSHIPS,

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WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS ESCELLENT AND UNCHANGED. ON FRENCH ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT HE DISCERNED AN IMPROVED FRENCH POSTURE. HE NOTED HE HAD BEEN PRIVATELY INFORMED AT THE QUAI THAT FOREIGN MINISTER GUIRINGAUD'S REFERENCE LAST DECEMBER TO A NATIONAL HOME FOR THE PALESTINIANS HAVING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A STATE WAS A SLIP OF THE TONGUE BY THE FOREIGN MINISTER. HE SAID THE FRENCH, AS A RESULT OF HIS EMPHATIC PROTESTS HAVE BACKED AWAY SLIGHTLY FROM THIS FORMULATION AND THAT GUIRINGAUD WAS METICULOUS DURING HIS MIDDLE EAST TRIP TO AVOID FURTHER UNWELCOME EVOLUTION OF FRANCE'S VERBAL FORMULAIE.

3. REGARDING EXCHANGES OF VISITS, GAZIT STATED THAT HE HAD BEEN OUTSPOKEN WITH GUIRINGAUD LAST FALL IN CONDEMNING THE ABSENCE OF EXCHANGES OF VISITS AT THE PRIME MINISTERIAL LEVEL. HE HAD USED THE TERM "BOYCOTT" IN DESCRIBING FRENCH AVOIDANCE OF SUCH A LEVEL. THIS HAD PRODUCED A HOPED FOR DISCUSSION WITH THE ELYSEE'S SECRETARY GENERAL WHICH RESULTED IN A FRENCH INVITATION FOR A RABIN (OR SUCCESSOR) VISIT TO FRANCE AT AN AS YET UNDESIGNATED DATE. WITH RESPECT TO OTHER FRENCH INTERNATIONAL ACTIONS, GAZIT IS HOPEFUL THE FRENCH WILL BE MORE CAREFUL AT THE UN AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL FORA NOT TO ASSUME A STANCE AS THE ARABS' ONLY FRIEND AMONG THE EC NINE.

4. GAZIT MAINTAINED THAT ON HIS ARRIVAL IN FRANCE IN DECEMBER 1975 HE HAD DECIDED THAT HE MUST ADOPT A CONFIDENTIAL

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POLICY OF CATCHING FLIES WITH VINEGAR RATHER THAN HONEY, IN CONTRAST TO HIS TWO PREDECESSORS HERE. HE ACCEPTED THAT HIS OUTSPOKENNESS HAS MADE HIM UNPOPULAR WITH THE QUAI D'ORDAY AND HAS CAUSED HIM TO BE UNFAVORABLY TALKED ABOUT AMONG MANY FRENCH LEADCSERSHIP CIRCLES, INCLUDING EVEN SOME FRIENDS OF ISRAEL. HE NOTED IN PASSING A PREVIOUS COMMENT ABOUT THIS PHENOMENON THAT WE HAD MADE TO HIM. GAZIT MAINTAINS THAT HIS POLICY HAS PAID OFF BECAUSE IT HAS BEEN EFFECTIVELY LINKED WITH ACCESS TO PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING BOTH DIRECTLY AND THROUGH ELYSEE SECRETARY GENERAL FRANCOIS-PONCET. GAZIT IS AWARE THAT MAJOR FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY DECISIONS STEM FROM THE ELYSEE. HE HAD OVER AN HOUR OF DISCUSSION WITH GISCARD LAST JUNE IN WHICH HE CLAIMS TO HAVE LAID DOWN THE LIMITS OF ISRAELI TOLERANCE OF FRANCE'S PRO-ARAB POSTURE. HE HAS MET WITH GISCARD SUBSEQUENTLY, INCLUDING AFTER HIS RECENT RETURN FROM ISRAEL FOLLOWING THE ABOU DAOUD AFFAIR. THE ELYSEE, HE BELIEVES, HAS

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RESPONDED TO HIS VIGOROUS REPRESENTATIONS AND TO HIS DISCREET AND RATHER FREQUENT CONTACTS WITH IT.

5. COMMENT: THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT FRANCO-ISRAELI RELATIONS ARE INDEED SOMEWHAT IMPROVED, NOTWITHSTANDING THE RECENT ABOU DAOUD FLAP. WHETHER GAZIT'S TREAT-THEM-ROUGH POLICY DESERVES AS MUCH CREDIT AS HE ATTRIBUTES TO IT IS DEBATABLE, BUT HE AND HIS GOVERNMENT CLEARLY MAINTAIN A CERTAIN LEVEL OF TOLERANCE FOR SOME "PRO-ARAB" POSITIONS OF THE FRANCH. THIS TOLERANCE LEVEL, HOWEVER, IS CLEARLY LIMITED AND THE ELYSEE IS NOW BETTER INFORMED AND MORE CONSIDERATE OF THOSE LIMITS. THIS CONSIDERATION, HOWEVER, IS CLOSELY RELATED TO FRENCH INTERNAL POLITICS AND THE FRANCH ELECTION SCHEDULE. THE SOCIALISTS HAVE HAD SOME SUCCESS IN MAKING THEMSELVES APPEAR TO THE LARGE PRO-ISRAELI SEGMENT OF THE ELECTORATE TO BE MORE FAVORABLY INCLINED
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TOWARD ISRAEL THAN IS THE GOVERNMENT. THE PAUSE IN THE FRENCH TILT TOWARDS THE ARABS STEMS SIGNIFICANTLY FROM ELYSEE EFFORTS TO COUNTER THAT PERCEPTION. IN FACT, WE SEE FEW SIGNS THAT GISCARD (OR AN EVENTUAL LEFT SUCCESSOR GOVERNMENT) HAS ABANDONED THE BASIC GOF POLICY OF TRYING TO KEEP ONE STEP AHEAD OF THE OTHER EUROPEANS IN CATERING TO ARAB DESIDERATA.
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